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The prayers of Jesus Christ





*THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST.*



*THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST.*

A CLOSING SERIES OF  
**LENT LECTURES**

DELIVERED IN THE

**Temple Church.**

BY

✓  
C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.

MASTER OF THE TEMPLE.

**London:**  
**MACMILLAN AND CO.**  
**AND NEW YORK.**

1891

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Cambridge :

PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A. AND SONS  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

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I.

*THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST  
IN THEIR GENERAL ASPECT.*



I.

LUKE V. 16.

*And He withdrew Himself into the  
wilderness, and prayed.*

‘GREAT multitudes came together—to hear—and to be healed of their infirmities.’ A wonderful miracle, type of all miracles in its surprising love and in its marvellous power, had sent away one life, one soul, too full of thankfulness to be able to obey the charge of silence laid upon it. The first cleansing of a leper was a trumpet-call to all sufferers to flock to the Emmanuel presence.

‘But He,’ St Luke writes, laying a strong emphasis upon the pronoun—He, whose praise was on all lips, and who was Himself the holy centre of all these mercies and all these activities—‘He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed.’

There is much more than this in the words.

It was not one withdrawal, nor one wilderness, nor one prayer—all is plural in the original—the withdrawals were repeated, the wildernesses were more than one, the prayers were habitual.

Have you ever noticed how St Luke is the special Evangelist of the prayers of Christ? I have thought to take this for our Lent subject, *The Prayers of Christ*. I do this not without many fears and misgivings in venturing once again, it may be but once more, to undertake a little course of Lent Lectures; and much more in venturing to offer to lead your thoughts into so deep, so solemn a subject as that of the mystery of the communings of Jesus on earth with the Father in heaven; but still impressed with the wonderful depth of this secret of which these few glimpses are given us, and feeling that it must interest and must repay your attention, if only the ignorance and feebleness of the treatment may have with it the help of the prayers alike of speaker and hearer for that breath of the Eternal Spirit without

which we must for ever speak and hear in vain.

We have sometimes asked ourselves whether we could at all account for St Luke's preeminence in this particular department of revelation, the record of the prayers of Jesus. St Paul's faithful and sympathetic companion, the beloved physician he calls him, might well be attracted towards the subject by the 'Pray without ceasing' (precept at once and practice) of his saintly master and friend. He tells us himself in the preface to his Gospel that he had used no common diligence in tracking the windings of that stream which was the manifold reminiscences of Jesus Christ in the hearts of those who had companied with Him all the time that He went in and out upon earth among them. St Matthew and St Mark leave this particular field of research almost untrodden. St John himself, though he compensates us for the omission by one unexampled outpouring of the heart of Jesus in the ear of His Father, makes no allusion to many

of the examples of prayer which the third Gospel enumerates. It is left to the third Evangelist to tell (for example) of the prayer which followed the Baptism, and of the prayer which preceded the Apostolic Ordination; of the prayer which was the very framework and setting of the Transfiguration, and of the prayer which gave occasion to the Lord's Prayer, with all its age-long and world-wide influences upon the Christianity of Christendom.

These are some of the treasures which lie before us if we should be permitted to carry to its completion the little plan which this night inaugurates.

Some one asked me the other day, with no thought or intention of irreverence, Do not you hate Lent? The question made me think whether I could do any little thing to make some one on the contrary love Lent. I felt how easy it would be for a person charged with a congregation at this season to make it doubly and a thousandfold distasteful by 'binding heavy burdens and

grievous to be borne' upon the consciences of his people; prescribing the abstinences and the mortifications by which its observance should be aggravated, and resting there the promise of benefits to be reaped from it. I thought that surely there must be something to reconcile men to it, might we but find it. If we could only preclude that vulgar and ignorant cavil, that we come together on Ash Wednesday to curse our neighbours—a misconception which led some one this morning to walk out with something of ostentation as we read the first sentences of the Communion; if we could only get people to see that what we there say 'Amen' to is not the sins of our neighbours, but the sins of which every germ and root is inside ourselves, and that what we do in that black recital is to place ourselves on God's side in antagonism to all those evil workings within us which are our plague and our shame and our peril, asking Him for mercy and praying to Him for grace in the conflict with each one—if we could do this, we should give another aspect

and colour to Ash Wednesday and to Lent itself; and I thought that by bringing Christ in as our loving example, in some definite way, in this lifelong warfare, it might be possible to change the whole idea of the season and its doctrine—to lead us to regard it as a help and a blessing, and to substitute for negation and repulsion something positive and attractive to the man within the man, in each one of us.

The Prayers of Christ is that chapter of the blessed Gospel which we will try on these evenings to open together.

And though we would make the whole thing as practical as possible, it is necessary, nevertheless, at the outset, just to touch the surface of that great deep, the humiliation of the Eternal Son in taking it upon Him to deliver man; because without doing this we might come perilously near to the losing sight of His Deity, or at all events to the hopeless confusion in which many minds dwell as to the ‘taking of the Manhood into God.’

St Paul must guide us, for we could not walk alone on this difficult ground. He says that, being originally in the form of God—that is, possessed of all the inalienable attributes of Deity—He counted not that inherent inalienable Deity a means of grasping or getting; on the contrary, He made Himself empty of that ownership of worlds and universes which was His as very God, taking upon Him the form of a creature, and coming into a new being in the likeness of men. And he goes on to tell how that humiliation to creature-form and creature-relationship was not all: He humbled Himself lower still, to an obedience, in that new shape and standing, of which the terminus was death, yea, the death of the cross.

This is the key—or we should not use it tonight—to the prayers of Christ. Having taken upon Himself the position (in all points) of a Man—living and learning, growing and maturing, teaching and ministering, within the limits of a human nature possessed and indwelt by the Holy Ghost—He conde-

scended, as one part of His humiliation, to need and to use all those means of grace by which man's soul is fortified for work and armed for conflict.

Mysterious, every word of it—open to a thousand cavils, to ten thousand misconstructions—yet also essential, every word of it, to that faith in the true and perfect Humanity of our Lord God Jesus Christ, without which all is chaos, all is contradiction, all is lighter than vanity, in the Gospel which is our life.

‘He was withdrawing Himself’—it was His custom—‘in the deserts, and praying.’

Sometimes the disciples ventured to follow Him. St Mark tells us of such an occasion. ‘In the morning,’ after a long day of toil in teaching and healing—when the human nature would have sought to recruit itself by longer sleep—‘rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon, and they that were with Him, followed after Him. And when they had found Him’—it was a quest

and search, for He had gone far and deep into the desert—‘they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee.’ And then at once, without irritation and without remonstrance, He obeyed the new call of duty, and said, ‘Let us go into the next towns, and preach there also : for therefore came I forth’ from the eternal home, from the bosom of God.

Let us too, this evening, my brethren, presume to follow Him into one of these deserts—not to call Him forth to meet new suppliants, but to rest with Him a little while to hear Him pray.

One of the objects of this season is humiliation. We all need it. The humblest of us knows but a little of the whole reason why we should lie low. ‘God is greater than our heart, and alone knoweth all.’

If I wished to humble any one, I should question him about his prayers. I know nothing to compare with this topic in its sorrowful self-confessions. Whether the public prayer or the private, it is one memory, one experience, of abasement, alike in the reluct-

ance of its beginning, the wandering of its course, and the inconsistency of its sequel.

But beyond this general consciousness of the unworthiness of our praying, I propose to you tonight a humbling comparison. I find it in the prayers of Jesus Christ. Think of them. Think how different they must have been from ours. Think of one topic which must have been wanting in His prayers, which is too often the one topic of ours.

What is it which drives us to the mercy-seat, so many of us as seek it? What is it which having been accomplished sends us away from it, satisfied, or half-satisfied, or dissatisfied, as the case may be, yet at all events having little or nothing else to detain us there? Is it not sin—our own sins, or, if we go one step further, our own sinfulness? Is not this the goad which drives us, willing or unwilling, to the throne of grace? Is not this the motive which alone makes us pray—the uneasy consciousness or half-consciousness of God's displeasure, which if we can avert, which if we can pacify, which if we can even

allay, the cause is removed for our staying there, the end is gained—at least the work is ended—for the sake of which we came?

Now when the Saviour kneels there from early dawn or all night long in His wilderness praying, that topic, that motive, that object, was a blank to Him. Have we thought of that? He had no sins of His own to be forgiven for. If that was the one idea of prayer, He might have rested His weariness in an all-night slumber, He might have started on the next day's round of duty without one hour or one moment of devotion preceding it.

It is a beautiful thought—the prayer of the Sinless must have had features quite its own. It could not have been quite our prayer. When it asked forgiveness, the sins were not its own. It was an unselfish, a selfless prayer, even for pardon. Did we ever know what it was to ask that another might be forgiven? Did the sins of son and brother, of neighbour and stranger, ever lie for a moment with oppressive weight upon the mind

and the soul of one of us? If so, then for that moment, in that one particular, our prayer for pardon was the prayer of Jesus Christ, who had no 'conscience of sins' when He knelt there in the wilderness praying.

Prayer for strength, the other half of the common human praying, may indeed have been His. He looked up to heaven, we know, when He would furnish forth the miraculous meal; He looked up to heaven beside the grave which He was to unlock; though it was with the confidence of a power already guaranteed, so that He could say, in the consciousness of a prayer as good as granted, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me, and I knew,' before I spake, 'that Thou hearest me always.'

Yet the prayers of Christ were real prayers, just as the temptations of Christ were real temptations. There was no acting and no feigning in the All-true. He prayed for real things, really prayed, and was really answered. It is by no means enough to account for His praying, to say that He sought to refresh

Himself after contact with earth by converse with heaven; that, weary with the contradiction of sinners, He sought the solace of a communion with the love which was His before the worlds. Prayer itself was no luxury, no self-indulgence, and no indolence. We know this from the one prolonged prayer preserved to us by St John. It was petition, direct petition, almost all through. The first half of the Lord's Prayer was the compendium of it. The second half of the Lord's Prayer needed to be differently worded for the use of its Author. O, when the success of the mighty enterprise, the undertaking to deliver man, was the thought of the heart, the business of the life, the motive of the death, can we doubt that it was also, in all its ramifications, the topic also of the prayers? And when we think of the length and breadth, the height and depth, of that work, in the regions of earth, in the secrets of hearts, in the mysteries of living and dying, already through eighteen centuries and more since those prayers; and when we think of the many hindrances and

vicissitudes and defeats of the work, still going on, still exercising the patience of the saints and still encouraging the scoffs of the infidel, all these ages since Christ knelt there in His desert praying about them all; what wonder can we feel it to be that the prayers were long—that suns set and rose upon the form of the God-Man as He still knelt and still wrestled, looking, as He could do, all down the stream of time into the ocean of that eternity in which at last time loses itself?

‘Neither pray I,’ He once said, ‘for these alone,’ these faithful few who have continued with me in my temptations, ‘but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.’ What if by face and name some of those here gathered tonight had place in those prayers? What if in all our afflictions He was afflicted, and was then bespeaking the Angel of the Presence in behalf of definite trials, personal sorrows, now gradually evolving and realizing themselves in us?

Surely, as we thus gaze and muse, our hearts must burn within us in increased

reverence for the Person of our Redeemer, increased desire to be included amongst His own, and to do Him no dishonour in the generation to which we must represent Him.

He was continually withdrawing Himself from human sight and contact, in those deserts of Palestine, and praying. With teaching and healing prayer divided His life. Already upon earth He was practising for the Mediation which divides with the supplying of the Spirit His work in heaven. Thus viewed, those prayers of Christ become more than beautiful, more than exemplary—they become parts of the great Undertaking which is the trust and the hope and the life of man.

And have we too no need of like withdrawals, after Him and with Him, into the wilderness? Are we so intensely spiritual that we need none of that desecularizing decarnalizing process of which the desert seclusions of Jesus are the perpetual parable?

God sometimes creates wildernesses for us. Here is the wilderness of bereavement, and there is the wilderness of difficult deci-

sions, and there is the more desert wilderness still of the self-accusation and the self-shame. Brethren, let us not refuse them : they too are of grace. Let us not say, I cannot, when God says, Come thou apart by thyself to hearken what I have to say of thee to thee. The desert too can blossom like the rose, if a willing heart goes there to meet its God.

And now and then, if God creates not the desert, we must. It is not safe to have the world always with us. It is not safe. The ground 'lacks moisture' which has only the glare of day upon it. See whether the despised old ordinance which assembles us here this evening may not have something in it—something not inappropriate and not valueless even for us. We will not let it become a form by prescribing its regulations, rigid and uniform, of one shape and colour and detail for all. We will use as not abusing ; cherishing in every ordinance of man, even of the Church, the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. We can do ourselves no harm by withdrawing, a little more than usual, even from

innocent throngings and pressings of the 'many coming and going,' it may be on business, or it may be for charity—withdrawing, I say, even into a Church-made, even into a man-made desert, and praying.

And shall we catch one last hint for this praying from our glance this evening at the prayers of Christ? Must our praying be always quite selfish? Shall there be no place in it for intercession? none for the work of God? none for the great struggling cause, of Christ and the Gospel? none for the coming kingdom, the new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? Think of these things when ye pray—'Hallowed be Thy Name: Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth'—and be ye well assured that in the same degree in which self, even if it be the self-soul and the self-salvation, recedes into the background of the praying, in that same degree the real man shall profit and make progress; were it but for this reason, that the real man is the man who lives not for himself, the man who loves

to lose himself in God and the brethren, the man who has learned Christ's lesson, and can kneel with Him in the wilderness of His love and His devotion.

ASH WEDNESDAY EVENING,

*March 6, 1889.*

II.

*THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST.*  
*AFTER HIS BAPTISM.*  
*BEFORE THE GREAT ORDINATION.*



## II.

LUKE III. 21.

*Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the  
heaven was opened.*

LUKE VI. 12, 13.

*He continued all night in prayer to God: and  
when it was day He called unto Him His  
disciples, and of them He chose twelve.*

WE have here a Baptism, and an Ordination. The Baptism is the Baptism of Christ. The Ordination is that of the twelve Apostles by Christ. Of the Baptism we make perpetual mention in the Litany: 'By Thy Baptism...Good Lord, deliver us.' To the Ordination we owe our New Testament, our Gospel, our Christianity.

They are two great events. We might well spend an evening in pondering them for their own sake. Tonight we are to view

them in a particular light. We have taken the Prayers of Christ for our Lent subject. We have noticed how much we owe to St Luke for his records of these prayers. We owe to him alone the mention of the prayers of Christ on the two occasions here before us—that of His own Baptism, and that of His Ordination of the twelve Apostles. Together they connect His prayers with solemn ordinances. They set Him before us praying on after His Baptism. They set Him before us spending a night in prayer before He ordained the Twelve.

We tried last week to say one necessary word upon the mystery (for such it is) of Christ's praying. We traced it up to the one higher mystery of the Incarnation. He who was from eternity very God became for us men and for our salvation very man. He humbled Himself to the condition of a man like us: not only hungering and thirsting, toiling and suffering, feeling weariness, feeling pain, like any of us; but also mentally, submitting to grow in wisdom; and also spiritually,

condescending to live by faith, to use means of grace, to resist temptation by conflict, to receive strength from God, and in all things to place Himself in the condition of a spiritual man, not availing Himself of the boundless resources of His own Divinity, but seeking day by day the enabling and consecrating presence within Him of the Holy Spirit of God. 'In the days of His flesh,' we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'He offered up supplications and prayers with strong crying and tears—and was heard in that He feared.' Prayer was His life. 'He withdrew Himself'—it was His habit so to do—not 'into the wilderness,' but far and deep 'in the deserts'—'and prayed.' 'In the morning,' after a long day of toil in teaching and healing, 'rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.'

That was a common day. But that life, like other lives, had special days and sacred seasons also. Two such are before us this evening.

1. The life of childhood and youth and early manhood, the home-life of filial duty and manual labour, the thirty years' education for the three years' ministry, is now ended. A great religious revival is stirring the heart of the nation, and summoning the people, high and low, from the remotest regions of Galilee into the wilderness of Judea and to the banks of Jordan. A Baptism of repentance is being preached by a young Prophet—suddenly, after four hundred years of Divine silence, manifested to Israel—avowedly in preparation for a higher revelation which is to have for its characteristic a Baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire.

For the moment, this mission of the Baptist has become the Divine Dispensation for Israel. The Redeemer Himself, standing as yet unknown and unnoticed among His people, must submit Himself to it that He may 'fulfil the righteousness' of an unquestioning obedience. He too betakes himself to the river of Jordan, mingling in that motley crowd which had in it not only the publican

and the sinner, but the Pharisee too and the Sadducee, the formalist and the sceptic, awed for the time into a unanimity of humility—He too presents Himself for that Baptism of repentance, though the baptizer himself meets Him with the remonstrance, ‘I have need to be baptized of Thee’—he read it in the face, if he knew it not otherwise—‘and comest Thou to me?’

Yes, He came. Came in humility. Came, He said, to fulfil all righteousness. ‘Suffer it,’ He said, ‘to be so now’—just for this present. Wait that Divine reversal of relations which shall be revealed in its season. ‘Suffer it to be so now.’ ‘And he suffered Him.’

We keep no festival of the Baptism. It is strange. The Baptism, like the Transfiguration, is said to be included in the general festival of the Epiphany or Theophany. We might wish it otherwise.

For surely that Baptism of the Sinless is memorable. It has much to tell us of the incorporation of the Incarnate with the race which He took it upon Him to deliver.

Baptism of repentance for Him who never sinned—what shall we say of it? This—that the sins of humanity were already lying upon Him, though the Cross was not yet reared, nor the shadows of Gethsemane yet distantly gathering.

He waited, it should almost seem, till the very last of the throng had received that they came for—the Baptism of confession and repentance, promising a Baptism deeper and nobler, more effectual because more spiritual. Then He came—as though to consummate and crown the rite by the submission to it of the One who needed it not for Himself, yet sorely needed it for the Adam race of which He had made Himself one on purpose that He might redeem and save.

That Baptism of John to which Jesus bowed Himself was no Sacrament. It offered no inward spiritual grace expressly attached to the outward visible sign. It was not ordained by Christ Himself—no, Christ Himself partook of it. Perhaps we emphasize and accentuate the difference too much in thus

speaking; for it was God's ordinance, and they who came to it in repentance, they who came to it in the faith of a Redeemer about to be manifested, came not to it in vain, and went not away from it empty. The Apostles themselves, so far as Scripture tells, received no other Baptism—though they who continued to cling to it after the virtue was gone out of it needed to be baptized over again in the name of Jesus.

It was a solemn thing, that Baptism in Jordan, with Christ standing among the recipients, joining Himself to the recipients, unknown. Many a Christening, in Christian days, when Baptism is a Sacrament, has been less so. That awful confession, wrung (it should seem) from Pharisee and Sadducee, as well as from publican and harlot—‘baptized of him,’ it says, ‘in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins’—was an act of humiliation, a pledge of amendment, almost beyond any of which Christian days have had experience; though little, we must fear, in many cases, came of it, when the light of common

day was let in again upon the strange transaction, and God, as it is written, 'went and returned to His place' till the real man in each one should seek Him again.

But One there was—to us, though not to them, the central figure—who after the Baptism remained to pray. 'Jesus also being baptized, and praying.' Who would not penetrate, if he were permitted to penetrate, into the mystery of that prayer; that prayer between the thirty years' seclusion and the three years' publicity—between the calm peaceful home of the past and the troubled storm-tossed no-home of the future?

That prayer was the immediate prelude to the first Lent—the forty days' and forty nights' fast, there in the wilderness among the wild beasts, the tempter coming and going, with his suggestions of Scripture authority for self-indulgence and for experimenting upon God, his offers of a road, short and royal, to an empire otherwise to be bought with blood and with ages of woe and crime. That prayer after the Baptism had doubtless all this in it.

It was the calling in of strength for that dread ordeal. It was the 'putting on of the whole armour of God' for that great 'withstanding in the evil day.'

The prayer had its answer on the instant. To it the heaven was opened, the Holy Ghost descended in visible form—visible to two persons, the baptizer and the baptized; and a voice was heard, audible to two persons—appointed sign to the one, comforting solace to the other—'Thou art my beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased.'

Brethren, that prayer of Christ, prolonged and protracted, after His Baptism, has its special lesson for us.

Much of the blessing, alike of Sermon, Service, and Sacrament, is lost by the want of the after-prayer of which Christ's is the example. Soon, too soon, does the world come back upon us after the holiest communion, after the most inspiring converse with the Invisible. 'Jesus also being baptized, and still praying, praying still, still praying

on, the heaven was opened and the Holy Ghost descended.'

2. We pass from the Baptism to the Ordination.

The Ministry, entered upon through the Baptism, is now running its course. The marginal dates in our Bibles leave room for months and years between the two texts. It is not important to settle the chronology. This, however, is important—to mark the difference between discipleship and apostleship. He called to Him the disciples, and of them He chose twelve to be Apostles.

A disciple is a learner. He is a scholar in the school of Christ. There were many such before this eventful election. Christ's method was to bring a number of men into personal contact with Himself. He ate and drank with them, walked about with them, took journeys with them, conversed with them, let them hear Him talk and deal with others, prayed with them—in every sense lived with them. He was writing Himself upon them all this time. We speak of making history.

He was making Christianity. Christianity is a life. A Christian is one who lives a Christ-like life. Christ was making Christians. This was what He principally aimed at by His Ministry. He did not write books. He did not promulgate commandments. He laid down principles, it is true. He interpreted letter into spirit. He 'fulfilled' by this process what had before been carnal into spiritual. But His great work upon earth was to impregnate a certain number of persons with His own mind and soul—so that Christianity should go forth into the lands and into the ages, not a beautiful idea, and not a faultless model, but a living soul—a spirit, and a life.

A number of persons had, by the time of which we are now speaking, been attracted into this relation to Him. They were His disciples—scholars, pupils, students—devoted to Him, but of various calibres and characters, not all fitted to reproduce and represent Him to the world of mankind.

Such was the position of things when at last He saw that the time was come for

introducing a new word into the new vocabulary. That word was to be not 'disciple' but 'Apostle.' St Matthew uses the new word only once. St Mark only once. St John only once. St Luke in his two treatises uses it almost forty times. It is curious, in this connexion, to add that the word 'disciple' dies out with St Luke—it does not survive into the Epistles.

A disciple is a learner. An Apostle is an emissary. The one is still in the school. The other has left it to become a teacher and an envoy and an ambassador.

We can judge whether the change from disciple to Apostle was a slight or uneventful one. In other words, we can appreciate the importance of that night which intervened between the discipleship and the apostleship of those twelve men. Our Lord felt it to be so critical an interval that He devoted the whole of it to prayer. 'He went out into a mountain'—'the mountain' it is called in the Greek, I suppose from its known connexion with the haunts of the Ministry—'to pray,

and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called to Him the disciples; and of them He chose twelve whom also He named Apostles.' And the list of the twelve follows.

The prayer of the night is our subject. We might have expected that that prayer would have asked for infallible directions in the choice. That there might be no one unworthy person among the twelve. That the selection might be so made that there should be no doubt as to its wisdom. That each one of the chosen should justify the choice, there being no exception to its uniform sanctity. The list ends—we all know the sound too well—'and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.'

A larger, if more difficult, scope is thus given to our conception of the prayer of that night.

These twelve men were to be the specially selected—they were to be nearest to the person—they were to form the innermost circle—of the Lord and Saviour. Should we

not all have said, Then, if infinite wisdom, nay, if ordinary discernment, is to preside over and direct the choice, each one of the twelve will be a pattern of holiness, will be a living answer to the question, what to think of Christ? And one of the twelve is Judas. And our Lord Himself said of them, 'I know whom I have chosen'—one of you is a false man—I know it, I knew it from the beginning.

It seems strange to us—though we can all read the solemn lesson that lay in it as to the difference between privilege and grace, between standing and character, between name and truth. The foresight of that blot and that stain must have introduced a sorrowful ingredient into the prayer of that night. To know that there must be close to His person one treacherous presence; that incarnate love and truth must have hatred and falsehood with it whithersoever it went—we scarcely see how that knowledge could have consisted with the prayer for the guidance of the morning's decision—were it not that we

have been made to feel how far-sighted, how deep-piercing, are the intuitions of infinite wisdom; how wonderful its developements, its evolutions, of good out of evil; how patient its waitings for the eventual end; how unsearchable its judgments, its ways how past finding out.

Let us go back to the eleven—afterwards to be supplemented by a faithful twelfth; still more wonderfully by a thirteenth greater than any, to whom we ourselves were to owe, instrumentally at least, first Evangelization, then Reformation.

Well might that be a night of prayer, upon which was to dawn the Ordination, or the Consecration, of the twelve Apostles.

When our Saviour's eye looked down the stream of time, and forecasted the boundless future which was to evolve itself out of that election; when He dwelt upon the fortunes of the Gospel, and of the race of man as bound up in them, and reflected upon the sense in which they must depend upon the way in which its first teachers and preachers

should present it—how easy it would be to travesty or to caricature it, how easy to make it speak smooth things or harsh things, childish things or false things, things unsuitable to this age or perilous to that, things making good hearts sad or bad hearts confident, just because the balance was disturbed or the proportion altered; was there not matter for His night-long intercession at the throne of grace for the disciples about to become Apostles, for the Apostles henceforth to be entrusted with this latest and largest interpretation of the mind and the will and the heart of God to men?

When we compare the first with any later, even with the next later, interpreters of the Gospel of grace and salvation; when we think of the trivialities, the puerilities, the distortions, the perversions, which came in upon the Church the moment that Inspiration itself was withdrawn or hushed; when we know what the Gospel may be without an authoritative written record of its fact and doctrine; we become deeply sensible of the debt we

owe to those original transmitters of the truth itself as it is in Jesus—we feel the divinity of that selection, we feel the reason as well as the power of that prayer which continued all night and then without pause or lull summoned the disciples, out of them to choose the twelve.

Unlearned men all of them—unknown, many of them, even as Apostles, for any distinctive work—we yet can thank God for their choice and for their mission; we can give glory to Him who then commissioned them, and sent them forth in the fulness of time equipped by the Pentecostal gift for the healing of the nations.

‘It came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God, and when it was day He called the disciples, and of them He chose twelve.’ From that choice sprang the little volume of the New Testament, words of eternal life; from it the real Christianity of Christendom; from it every word and work, during these eighteen cen-

turies, of piety, of purity, of charity ; from it the great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, standing, and to stand, before the throne of God, clothed with white robes—washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

SECOND WEDNESDAY IN LENT,

*March 13, 1889.*

III.

*THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST.  
BEFORE THE GOOD CONFESSION.  
AT THE TRANSFIGURATION.*



### III.

LUKE IX. 18.

*It came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him, and He asked them, saying.....*

LUKE IX. 28.

*It came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered.....*

THE Prayers of Christ have been taken for our subject on these evenings in Lent. Last week we had the prayer after the Baptism, and the prayer before the choice of the Apostles. Tonight we have two other prayers. St Luke is again the historian of both. Let us pray for help in their pondering. They are full of instruction, may we but find it and draw it out.

Both the prayers for this evening belong to one section of the history. That section presents a marked moment of the life of Christ—a moment which divides the Ministry into two periods; short, both of them, in the measure of months and years; pregnant, both of them, in lessons of time and in revelations of eternity. The one period opens with the Baptism. The other period opens with the Transfiguration.

I. We are struck with this feature in studying the great Life—especially in its dealing with other lives in contact with it—its wonderful patience. I speak not now of its longsuffering under rebuke and blasphemy. I speak of its wonderful absence of haste or precipitancy in the treatment of character.

Brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ was—may I not say, is—a Divine Educator. Compare Him with human instructors. Compare Him, not least, with persons who undertake the mighty task, the indeed formidable task, of what they would call Christian Education. One thing stands out

conspicuously in differencing their educating from their Master's—its haste and hurry, its feverishness and impatience. Every little child must be made to confess Christ—no matter if it be even before it can have known Him. O for one recollection of the Parable of the seed growing secretly—of the treasure hidden once, hidden twice, before it is made public!

The former of our two texts suggests the reflexion.

'Thy gentleness,' a Psalmist says, 'hath made me great.' Yes, the gentleness of God in dealing with minds. Jesus Christ counted no time wasted in preparation. He Himself spent thirty of His three and thirty years below in preparation, silent preparation, for the brief lifetime which had centuries and eternities in it. Even so with His disciples who were to be His Apostles. He began by attaching them. He began by having them with Him, that they might learn to love Him first, and then by degrees to understand Him. They must grow into

faith. They could not all at once grasp the mystery of the two Natures. They must let it reveal itself gradually. They must live with it and it with them, and wait till it sank in and settled itself before they put it into words. A premature question might have spoilt all. Many an injudicious question has spoilt all. There are things which must be lived into, up to, and on to. To let in upon them prematurely the light of observation, and the breath of enquiry, and even the suggestion of definition, is to stunt and dwarf and stop the growth. 'In due time' is God's motto. The world has owed everything to it. The man has owed everything to it. It was Christ's maxim also in the training of that little circle which was to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

But now the time has come for a step onwards. These men must be made to gather into one, and to speak out, the net result of these months of silent companying. They must be brought to book (so to say) as to

their dim floating ideas. The time is come for Confession; not in the sense of confession of sins—that was done when they were baptized of John in Jordan—but in the sense of the confession of Christ; in the sense of St Paul's saying, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' The time for this last is come—how shall it be done?

The Divine Master takes them apart by themselves. He takes them with Him on a journey—the furthest journey that He ever made northward in Palestine—and into scenery at once the most secluded and (they say) the most striking. We do not suppose that He called their attention to it. The old Panium, with its reminiscences of a heathen mythology—the new Cæsarea Philippi, with its name redolent at once of flattery and of vanity—no, He would not notice these, at least to them. Nor do we imagine Him—certainly the Gospels give no hint of it—to have bidden them dwell with fond ad-

miration on that central spring, one of the sources of the sacred Jordan, or upon the snowy range of Hermon towering some seven or eight thousand feet above the lovely plateau on which human hands had built and rebuilt. The business before them was enough to occupy all thoughts. He had brought them there for a sacred purpose. They were to pass from an unrealized to a realized conviction. They were to pass from the spiritual stage of 'believing unto righteousness' into the further spiritual stage of 'confessing unto salvation.'

Can you wonder if, as St Luke, and again St Luke alone, tells us, this step, this leap, this bound, was prefaced by prayer—one of the prayers of Christ? 'It came to pass that He was alone praying,' when His disciples broke in upon His solitude—or perhaps (the words are open to that suggestion) were with Him all the time, not intruding, not interrupting, yet witnesses of His absorbed and engrossed and unconscious solitude—and He put to them this question

—leading on to another (which was the real) question—for what and for whom did the crowds that sometimes followed and were always discussing Him—for what and for whom do they take Him?

Surely there is Divine skill, Divine tenderness too, in this way of putting the question. He asks first what do other people say—what is the popular idea of Him—before He goes on to propose the vital question, But what do ye, my disciples, my near ones, my own, say and think of me? Even when the time has come for fixing their floating thoughts, for getting an answer, positive and peremptory, as to the state of their own belief—even then He will approach the subject distantly, lest haply, even then, a too sudden and abrupt interrogation might startle, perplex, or deter them.

Well, they say, opinions are divided. John the Baptist, risen again from the death in Machærus—that is one idea. Elias, come again to fulfil the last prophecy of the Old Testament—that is another. A prophet

—one of the prophets—without pledging themselves to a name or an identification—that is a third. In the midst of all these ignorant or superstitious imaginings, what say ye? The time has come for an answer—and the brave, sometimes too brave, Peter, as usual, is the spokesman. ‘The Christ of God.’

But it is upon the preliminary prayer of Jesus that we would fix your thoughts this evening. Interpret the topic of that prayer (as alone we can do) by its consequence, and what shall we say of it?

I think that a word from the context in St Matthew will give us an answer. St Luke is silent here. But the first Gospel says that Jesus our Lord rejoined to the good confession, ‘Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.’

Was it not then for that revelation, that unveiling, that the ‘effectual fervent prayer’ had ascended? When we think what lay in

the good confession ; what for future generations ; what for a world about to be bought with blood ; what for a Church to be founded, as upon a rock, upon that brief utterance, so easy in word, so vital, so boundless, in the thing signified—can we imagine an occasion more suitable for the exercise (by anticipation) even of the Mediatorial office, than that which required, and waited for, an unveiling, not by flesh and blood, but by a Father in heaven, to men standing here in all the backwardness and in all the boundedness of a fallen humanity, of a mystery kept secret hitherto from eternal times ?

Brethren, that prayer of Christ, preliminary to the good confession, is not silent now. Every Baptism of the grown man ; every Confirmation of the child now come to an age of intelligence ; every Sacrament of Holy Communion announcing Christ's death till He come ; every demand made upon the tempted for the brave answer, 'How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?' every alternative of shame

or honour, of death or life, by which the faith is tried at this hour, in cruel Africa, of native convert, youth or boy, flung into the very furnace, seven times heated, of persecution—each one of these is a crisis like that of Cæsarea Philippi for the first twelve; and ill were it, fatal were it, for any one of them, if the great Intercessor were then silent in heaven, or if upon His heart of human Deity He did not bear the very name of the imperilled disciple, asking for him in particular that grace of the unveiling which flesh and blood cannot give, only the Father in heaven.

2. One week separates the Confession from the Transfiguration. It is spent in foretelling the Cross—for Himself and for His people. The thought of the Messiahship and the Divine Sonship, if it stood alone, might elate, might even intoxicate, its new confessors; might seem to tell of thrones and crowns, of chief places of dignity in a world-wide kingdom. On the other hand, the prediction of the Cross, had it been given earlier,

might have too much depressed and daunted the hearts of immature and half-unconscious disciples. The skill of the wise Educator is seen here again, in tempering together the two revelations—the revelation of the glory and the revelation of the abasement. Ill prepared were they for the combination. Under the stress of the prophecy of the crucifixion, Peter the rock becomes for a moment Peter the stumbling-block, and the sternest words that ever passed the Saviour's lips rebuke the ignorant love which ventures to contradict the prediction of the Passion.

Doubly needful was the announcement of the Cross, for Him and them, as they drew nigh the holy mount on which they were to behold His glory.

Three chosen disciples are to be its privileged witnesses, and it left its mark upon them for ever. St Peter in his old age speaks of that night on Hermon as proof enough (if it stood alone) that he had 'followed no cunningly devised fables in making known everywhere the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ.' It was to him, he says, the authoritative confirmation of the whole Volume of Old Testament Scripture in which, 'moved by the Holy Ghost, men speak from God.'

By the nature of the case the evidence of the Transfiguration was more impressive to the three spectators than it can be to the readers of their account of it. It requires, at all events, that we should be Christians in order to our undoubting acceptance of it. When we have the witness in ourselves that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, then and not till then will miracle in any form be intelligible, and not least in that form in which it is the anticipative investiture of the Saviour who has yet to die with His body of glory, made visible for that hour to mortal eyes, as it shall one day be to the world of quick and dead, when, as it is written, 'every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him.'

Let it be the joy and the glory of us Christians to have a faith or two altogether and absolutely, secretly and sacredly, our own.

The world keeps its Christmas, its Easter, its Whitsuntide; puts its own gloss upon each, but keeps it still. The world keeps no Transfiguration. The 6th of August bears that name in the Calendar, but no one notices it. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him'—let this be one part of it.

Marvellous, miraculous revelation! The transfigured Lord, His countenance shining like the sun and His raiment bright as the light. Two saints of the old world manifested in glory, representatives of earlier Dispensations, speaking with Him of that decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, and in which each type of the Law and each line of the Prophets was to find its interpretation and its fulfilment. What mysteries gather round the scene—who can wonder if the bewilderment of the three witnesses expressed itself in the dreamy proposal of one of them, to make there three tabernacles and forget in an Elysium of enjoyment the sins and the woes of a world under their feet?

Our subject is not the Transfiguration, but

the prayer of Christ before it and during it. He went up into that mountain, some spur perhaps or shoulder of Hermon, to pray. It was as He prayed that the fashion of His countenance was altered—there appeared unto Him Moses and Elias—a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of it saying, as before at His Baptism, ‘This is my beloved Son : hear Him.’

He went up there to pray. It was as He prayed that He was transfigured. Can we at all interpret this prayer? Was it a prayer for such a sign of His Sonship as should write once for all upon the hearts of these witnesses the conviction of the good confession? Was it for the presence of those holy men of old time who might receive the interpretation of their own life’s work, and carry it back with them into the Paradise of their rest and their preparation? Was it that He Himself might be refreshed and comforted by some visible and audible proof of the Father’s love and the Father’s presence, such as might send Him back into His toil-

some life, and speed Him towards His suffering death, the stronger and the braver and the more resolute?

We know not and cannot know what that prayer specially asked, beyond the perpetual petitions of the long nights and the many solitudes which have their record in the Gospels—in this third Gospel particularly—of the Life and Death.

But we may know, I think, some of the Divine intercessions specially needed by us in seasons of which the Transfiguration is for all time the august and solemn type.

Seasons every life has of a brighter experience than the common. Seasons of exhilaration, natural or spiritual, in the seclusion of a temporary rest from labour, or in the converse of loved and honoured friends. How natural is the wish to multiply these, to perpetuate these, to the neglect of everyday duties, or to the forgetfulness of other men's sorrows! How ready are we to propose the 'three tabernacles,' to arrest the flying joy and to postpone the fading of the beautiful vision!

The rarer the enjoyment, the keener and the more impetuous ; the stronger the temptation to abuse it, the reluctance to resign it into the hand that gave it. Is it wrong to think at such moments of the gracious intercession above, which would ask for us to use as not abusing, even if it be the Christian intercourse or the spiritual happiness? These things must come and go : duty before pleasure, even in the soul.

But another thought comes to us out of the Transfiguration prayer of Christ. How sorely do we all need that sort of view of Him—were it but for once—which shall never fade again out of the memory, the soul's memory, of the beholder. St Peter thought of that one sight, when he was now drawing nigh to his own 'exodus' (as he calls it in that passage, with apparent reference to the word, the same word—by us rendered 'decease'—in St Luke's record of the Transfiguration), and said that it assured him of the truth of his preaching, and of the truth of his Gospel, on to the very end. Which of us

does not want just that something, if it might be so, to turn faith into sight and hope into knowledge? It would perhaps come to us—or something of its kind—if we watched for it as men watch for the morning—if we had the patience and the earnestness to say to the Divine visitant, ‘I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.’ Shall we use the record of the Transfiguration prayer as giving us hope that the heavenly intercession may ask that indeed beatific vision, the spiritual sight of Christ, even for us?

And then, finally, how do we all need that firm hold of the two revelations, the Cross and the Glory of Jesus Christ, which He enforced so strongly by the teaching and the prayer of this memorable moment. First the good confession of the Divine Sonship. Then the correcting prophecy, The Son of God and Son of Man must suffer many things—must be mocked and buffeted and crucified—must die and rise in order to His glory. Then the Transfiguration—Christ seen in altered form, such as He shall be in the Advent. Then

again, in descending from the holy mount, the same sorrowful yet restraining remembrance, 'So must the Son of Man suffer.' And thus they reach the perplexed crowd and the agonized sufferer, and enter again upon the daily round of an unresting world and a self-sacrificing service.

May the prayer of Christ in heaven reconcile us to this twofold condition—a Divine Lord dying to save, a Divine love humbling itself to suffer, a Cross uplifted to draw all men to Him who hangs upon it, a Cross to be borne now by all who would enter into the glory.

By Thy Cross and Passion, by Thy Death and Burial, by Thy Resurrection and Ascension, Good Lord, Good Lord, deliver us.

THIRD WEDNESDAY IN LENT,

*March 20, 1889.*

IV.

*THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST.*  
*BEFORE THE LORD'S PRAYER.*



## IV.

LUKE XI. 1, 2.

*And it came to pass, that, as He was praying  
in a certain place, when He ceased, one of  
His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us  
to pray.....*

*And He said unto them, When ye pray,  
say.....*

WE have spoken on former occasions of the prayers of Christ in general—how they formed one exercise of that humiliation to our nature by which He took it upon Him to deliver man. We have spoken of His habitual prayers, of His frequent withdrawals into desert places, for the purpose of praying, as a customary practice of His holy life. We have spoken of some of the special prayers of Christ—of the prayer after His Baptism, and of the prayer before the Ordination of His twelve Apostles. We spoke last

week of His prayer, in the seclusion of the mountain regions of Palestine, before eliciting from His disciples the great confession of His Messiahship and Divine Sonship: also of the prayer for the sake of which (St Luke tells us) He withdrew three of His disciples with Him into what St Peter calls (from that event) 'the holy mount,' some outlying spur (probably) of Hermon, and in the course of which He was transfigured before them into the likeness of His future risen body of glory.

Tonight we are to try to set before ourselves, as God shall enable us, another of the prayers of Christ on earth, recorded, like the former, by St Luke alone of the Evangelists—it is that prayer which preceded and preluded the giving of His own Prayer for the perpetual use of His Church and people below.

It is quite impossible for us to exaggerate the importance of the occasion.

We must dwell for a few moments upon that wonderful gift—that 'When ye pray,

say'—that briefest, tersest, fullest, of all forms of prayer, the only exhaustive one, the only perfect and sufficient because all-embracing and all-comprehending one—and then we will see whether anything comes to us out of it suggestive of the topics of the prayer which prefaced it and out of which (as it were) it sprang—the prayer of Christ Himself, in that 'certain (yet uncertain) place,' the site of which no man knows, but in which some unnamed disciple said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray,' and from which the response came, not 'to him' but 'to them'—for a whole world was the real recipient of it—not, 'When thou prayest,' but 'When ye pray'—say the 'Our Father' which is heard in heaven.

Was not the occasion worthy of a special prayer of Christ to consecrate it?

How shall we put into words all that the gift of the Lord's Prayer had in it for the Church and for the Christian?

I do not believe that childhood or youth or even middle life or anything short of old

age can at all fully appreciate the Lord's Prayer.

It is condensed, it is deep, it is difficult. No commentary and no catechism can elucidate without diluting, or improve without spoiling it. Not until that age comes which demands above all things the real and the strong and the substantial, the thing that can be leaned upon and rested upon and (when the time comes) died upon, can any man know in himself all that the great Lord did for us when He answered that request, 'Teach us to pray,' and answered it in the particular form to which eighteen centuries have appropriated the grand title, of 'The Lord's Prayer.'

(1) In the first place, it settled once for all the great question of praying. 'When ye pray'—as of course you do pray. Prayer is sometimes called an instinct. It is an instinct of the original nature—the nature made in God's image, after God's likeness—would that the fallen being always found it so! Certainly prayer has no exemption from

the assaults of a scoffing generation. Thankful ought we to be that we have our Saviour's express warrant for it.

The Lord's Prayer is that—that first and before all else—Christ's warrant for prayer. His example would have been something. His permission, His encouragement, His command to pray, would have been more. But to possess a form of words recorded (with a beautiful variety yet substantial identity) in our sacred books, handed down by universal tradition, used by all nations and in all languages, as the undoubted utterance of the Divine Human Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of His flesh—this is a sort of *sacrament* of prayer, an outward visible sign presenting to the very senses the assurance of the inward spiritual grace attending and following.

(2) Think, again, of the Lord's Prayer as the one inspired Liturgy of the Christian Society. An old prophet said, 'Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.' And he supplied those words for the special

purpose then present. It was enough perhaps to show that there was nothing wrong in a prepared and premeditated utterance at the throne of grace. But that would have been a somewhat precarious foundation on which to rear the superstructure of a congregational form of worship. Our Lord Himself said, 'Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' But this taught nothing as to the utterances of the gathered two or three: it might have seemed to point rather to special requests to be agreed upon at the moment than to customary petitions repeated or read in stated assemblies. The precept, 'When ye pray, say,' goes far beyond this. It is a warrant for the lawfulness of forms of worship. It recognizes the want, in a body of worshippers, of that which shall safeguard them from the accidents of health and feeling in their leader or minister; from that variableness or that eccentricity which might mar or pervert the exercise of public prayer, on any particular occasion, or for one

whole generation at least of one fold of the flock.

The Lord's Prayer is a liturgy. As such, it supplies a want. As such, it guarantees uniformity, so far as uniformity is a condition of unity. So long as the Christian congregations all over the world unite in the offering of prayer to God in the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, so long uniformity itself is not quite broken—how much less unity!

The Lord, who instituted two Sacraments—the one at the entrance of His Church, the other for the perpetual refreshment of His people as at a table spread for them in the wilderness—instituted also one liturgy for the perpetual security of harmony and sympathy in the addresses of His people to the God and Father through Him.

Let us make much, my brethren, of this gift of gifts, as a substantial bond of union among all Christian people, however widely, in other respects, divided and separated. They have a common prayer, if they have not a Common Prayer-Book. Our Church makes

much of the Lord's Prayer. Some would say, too much—it is repeated too often. I cannot agree with them. Each time it has a separate meaning, or the worshipper can give it one. And while we thankfully use other forms which the piety of past ages has supplied for the use of our own branch of the Church of Christ, let us ever remember, as truth and duty bid us, that those added forms rest on a different level of authority from this one. Whatever they possess of authority they derive from their conformity of tone and subject to this one. Their use does not create, their disuse does not destroy, any such uniformity as is of the essence of unity. They who pray the Lord's Prayer together unite in the one liturgy which came down from heaven, as they who use the two Sacraments, of Baptism and the Supper, observe the only ritual which can claim the authority of Christ Himself for its institution.

(3) We pass from the thought of the Lord's Prayer in these two general aspects,

into the thought of it as a Gospel—in the strictest sense a revelation of grace and truth.

If our Lord had stood but for one hour upon earth in the character of a Divine Teacher; if His Ministry had been measured not by years but by moments, only leaving Him time to speak these two words, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father;' He would still have been the Evangelist of humanity in virtue of that one utterance. Those two words are a Gospel—the one revealing to man the heart of God, the other knitting to each other the hearts of men.

'Father'—'our Father'—great repose is in the words. This one relationship is antecedent to wish or will, independent of choice or liking. The exile in the far country has a home and a father still; and when his thoughts light upon or turn back to either, he has a name for each, ready made and unalterable. 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare—I will arise and go to him,' as I am,

and as he is. By no other name could Christ have conveyed any shadow of the same assurance. By the choice of this name He says to us,

Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream.

No son can either win or lose, either earn or forfeit, a father. He may have left his home; he may have been exiled from it for his misconduct or for his undutifulness; he may have spent years of life in disgrace and misery, cut off by his own fault from all the comforts and sympathies of sonship: yet if 'even from thence' his heart looks back to the far past and recalls the memories of his childhood, there is a face and a form there not of a stranger; he can call that person but by one name; it is a name which has permanence, it is a name which guarantees help; he needs not to wait and see whether the relationship is still in force, he can lay his plans and forecast his future on the faith of it. Even so ye, whatever the guilt of your past, whatever the

distance of your present, may be quite sure of one thing—there is a relationship prior to merit, prior to will, prior to consciousness. Whosoever and whatsoever ye be, ‘When ye pray, say, Father.’

Who is there of us all, brethren, who needs not this particular Gospel? Is there one—yes, perhaps there may be one amongst us—to whom that Father can say, ‘Son, thou art ever with me’—thou hast kept thy first love, thou hast never left thy original home? Still even that one, that exceptional one, stands on the same footing of the unmerited sonship. And, for one such, are there not indeed ninety and nine who have gone astray, and to whom—if it be true—it comes indeed as a Gospel to hear that voice from heaven, ‘When ye pray, say, Father?’

This is one half of the Gospel of the Lord's Prayer. And the other is but the corollary and the complement of it. ‘And ye all are brethren.’ ‘Children, all, of one Father, Sirs, ye are brethren.’ The Gospel of the Fatherhood is the Gospel also, in the same breath, of the brotherhood. ‘When ye pray,

say, Father.' Then, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father.'

(4) Not less wonderful in its direction is the model of prayer which thus opens.

Half of it is gone through before we reach ourselves. Half of it is about God. Wonderful condescension, that we should be admitted into such heights of sympathy and of communion! Wonderful grace, that we should be promised the will and the power to make such sympathy real and such communion sincere! But also, wonderful wisdom, Divine insight and intuition into human minds and hearts, that we should thus be instructed in the blessedness of being little, in the happiness of the self-forgetting and the self-obliterating in the one greater and higher interest, which is the glory and honour of God Himself!

Thy name—which is being interpreted, Thou Thyself—may we all hallow it, count and treat it as holy. Thy kingdom, Thy rule in hearts, may it not only *be*—for it is—but *come*; travel towards us—for that is 'coming'—till it be amongst us, with us, with-

in us, for ever. Thy will, which is our happiness, Thy will, which is our good, Thy will, which is our sanctification—may it be done—done here on earth, as it is done in heaven.

Yes, brethren, we are not forgotten even in God—even in the petitions which tell and speak and think of God. Not forgotten: no, but put in our place: insignificant, yet dear—insignificant ourselves, dear to Him.

And when we at last avowedly reach ourselves, what comfort, what assurance, is here! Bread—bread for the coming day—tomorrow is with Thee; support and sustenance for each part of us; give that, and judge Thou, not we, what that is. Our sins—these evil things done, these good things left undone, today and yesterday; that old past, so grievous when we look back upon it from kneeling where God is; that clogging, binding, enslaving force of evil done and good left undone; forgive it, send it away, unbind it from off us—that is absolution. What quiet confidence of its being done! What marvellous sympathy, to avow that these sins are very real and very serious, and yet to

tell us that we may as confidently ask their forgiveness as we may ask the gift of today's bread! But yet there is one thing as real and as needful even as these two—that threatening future—that unseen invisible thing into which we must step forth from this praying, and which bristles with perils for creatures such as we are. O, we know not what it has in it for us—but Thou knowest. O lead us not into temptation, were it but to try us. We are weak, we are helpless—O suffer us not to be tempted above that we are able. At least make Thou for us the way to escape, and cause Thou us to take it.

Let us earnestly ask ourselves, brethren, whether we have been faithful to the precept, 'When ye pray, say?' Do we make full use ourselves of the Lord's Prayer? Do we, in the use of it, think into it, and think out of it, some of its hidden treasures of grace? Do we take literally enough its companion words in St Matthew, 'When ye pray, use not vain repetitions—your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before

ye ask Him—after this manner therefore pray ye?’ Is not the old weary round too often trodden in our praying, as if indeed the Lord’s Prayer were not? a wandering mind first to be dragooned into attention; then a dreary detail of trespasses to be dragged forth into confession; then a reiterated cry to be evoked for pardon and forgiveness; and then, without other thought for God or our brother, the ungrateful task for that time ended—feeling more or less soothed, but the heart still on the earth; heaven no more real, the Invisible no more seen, than in the yesterdays of the past poor life?

Finally, one word has still to be spoken upon that prayer of Christ Himself before the giving of the Lord’s Prayer, which was made the text of the Sermon.

We spoke last week of the drawing forth of the good confession, till then slumbering in the hearts of the disciples, as in some sense the crisis and turning-point of the Ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. With almost equal truth might we so describe the occasion which is our subject this evening.

What an event for the Church—what an event for the Church and for the Christian of all time—was this revelation (it is no less than a revelation) of the Lord's Prayer! Is it presumptuous to picture to ourselves how the thoughts of the Saviour must have been preventing and following the course of that form of words down the stream of time? The Lord's Prayer, as truly as any person or any nation, has had its life and its history. It is now more than eighteen centuries and a half old. Think how it has affected and influenced lives, all these ages. In that prospect (is it too much to say?) how must the Saviour have dwelt upon the effect of that Prayer upon minds and hearts and souls in their passage and progress through this world into the other! I know we must impress upon ourselves the warning voice, 'The place where thou standest is holy ground.' We must not presume to speak confidently where God has not spoken. But not on that account should we shrink from a serious pondering of mysteries too high and too deep for us—may it but be with reverence

that we turn aside to see this great sight, the Saviour rising from His own prayer to give inspiration for ever to the prayer of others.

Might He not be praying, in that prayer of preface and prelude, that the spirit of the Prayer He was about to prescribe might be indeed the spirit in all future ages of His disciples and of His Church? That the filial heart might be the religion of His people—the filial, and the brotherly? That sinners might be enabled to view aright their own standing; as sinners, yet sons; sons still, however sinful; not waiting to be made sons, but emboldened to claim and to exercise a sonship which is theirs by birth, in right of a Divine creation, a Divine redemption, and a Divine evangelization? That in this sonship, of right theirs, yet all of grace, they might see and feel to be included all mankind, however widely severed and dissociated by birth and place, by thought and phrase, by habit and custom in things secular or in things sacred? That His Church might ever be interested in the work of God, His cause

and His glory, and might ever give the first place in its prayer to that which concerned these? That the great message of forgiveness of sins might be so written upon the hearts of His people that they might be able to use it with quietness and confidence for their daily comfort and strengthening, forgetting the things behind and reaching forth always to the things before? That thus His Gospel might approve itself to the conscience and heart of mankind, as indeed the power of God unto salvation, a religion of light, life, and love, spreading blessing everywhere around it, and, like the crucified Lord whose living witness it is, lifted above earth while planted upon it, drawing all men unto it, and so unto Him?

Enough for this time. May the word, spoken in weakness, be brought home with power—the Lord working with it, and confirming it, in them that hear, by signs following.

FOURTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT,  
*March 27, 1889.*

V.

*THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST.  
IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.*



## V.

LUKE XXII. 41, 44.

*And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly.*

THE Prayers of Christ—His own prayers in the days of His flesh—have been our study during this Lent. Our texts have been all from one Gospel, that of the companion and biographer of St Paul, the beloved physician once, afterwards an Evangelist and physician of the soul. We have found St Luke abundant in his records of the Prayers of Christ. Many of these we should not have known of but for him. Even the habitual prayers—prayers of the early morning, prayers of seclusion sought in deserts, prayers of personal devotion apart from all

human companionship—find an emphasis in the phraseology of the third Gospel peculiar to it. His prayers on remarkable occasions—His prayer after His own Baptism, His prayer before His choice of the Apostles, His prayer before eliciting from them the great confession of His Messiahship and Divine Sonship, His prayer before and during His transfiguration, His prayer before teaching us to pray the Lord's Prayer—these have been made our subjects of meditation on former evenings: something, I trust, has been learned from them of added reverence for Him and of helpful suggestion for ourselves.

The three separate streams of Gospel history meet to-night in Gethsemane. St Luke is alone no longer. All the three Gospels relate the Agony in the Garden. St John alone is silent here; silent doubtless because the other three have spoken. And even St John, who does not relate the Agony itself, relates what I might call a rehearsal of the Agony some days before it; a scene in the Temple-courts closely and strongly re-

sembling it, alike in the prayer for the passing of the dark hour, and in the correction of that prayer into one of simple and single entreaty for the glorifying of the great Name.

And St Luke, though he is not alone in describing the Agony, is alone nevertheless, even here, in some of its most touching particulars. When we make this one of the suffrages of the Litany, 'By Thine Agony and bloody sweat...Good Lord, deliver us,' we use a word found only in St Luke, though from him now the universal term for that season of anguish; and we make mention of an incident of that night which St Luke only has recorded, when he says that 'His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' To St Luke alone we owe the mention of the ministering Angel, appearing to Him not so much for the mitigation of the anguish as for His strengthening under it for a yet more intense and fervent supplication.

The differences of the three narratives of the Agony are indeed immensely interest-

ing. Each one has something of its own. St Matthew alone gives us the words of two prayers, and shows us a progress of discipline in doing so. St Mark adds to the word 'cup' the explanatory word 'hour,' and, in doing so, harmonizes the Agony with its 'shadow cast before' in St John. St Luke's contributions to the full record we have touched upon. The Revised Version marks in its margin the omission of the two verses containing them by 'many ancient authorities.' But sufficient testimony is quoted in the commentaries from early Christian writers to show that the omission of the verses does not touch the faith of the Church in the truth of the facts. There was a living voice of memory, as well as a written letter of history, to tell what Jesus did. St John says of the one that the world would not hold the books if all had been written. Scripture came to define, not to silence, the tradition; and even if Scripture in a particular instance were silent, the memory might be true for all that.

It is time that we should give ourselves with all our hearts to the solemn prayer and prayers of Christ in this night in which He was betrayed.

The Last Supper is ended. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is instituted; unintelligible, in its full significance, until to-morrow—yes, and for fifty days longer. The great Discourse in the guest-chamber, the great Intercession, these too are ended; and the Saviour has gone forth across the brook Kedron to the Garden whither He oftentimes resorted with His disciples. The Eleven are with Him. Judas alone is absent—he is gone to guide the captors to the likely spot for the capture. ‘Sit ye here,’ Christ has said to the Eleven, ‘while I go and pray yonder:’ but He takes with Him the three who have been on former occasions the chosen among the chosen, and, confiding to them His exceeding sorrow even unto death, bids them tarry where they are, and watch (keep awake) with Him.

St Luke does not particularize this selec-

tion of the three, but says that He was withdrawn from the disciples about a stone's cast, and kneeled down—St Mark says, He fell on the ground—St Matthew says, He fell on His face—and prayed. The three Gospels give the first prayer in substantial agreement. Let us bless God for those small disagreements by which independence is proved and in which truth completes itself. St Matthew says, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me : nevertheless (be it) not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' St Mark says, 'He prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him ; and said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee : make this cup to pass from me : but (the question is) not what I will, but what Thou wilt.' St Luke says, 'Father, if Thou wilt'—if it is Thy wish—'make this cup to pass from me : nevertheless, let not my will but Thine be.' Who would wish to lose that exquisite unity in variety—the 'cup,' and the 'hour : ' 'let it pass'—'make it to pass : ' 'if it is possible'—'if it is Thy wish : ' 'not

as I will, but as Thou wilt'—'not what I will, but what Thou wilt'—'let not my will but Thine be.' A great lesson is here in the mighty science of Inspiration—what Inspiration is, and is not. Scripture has the breath of God in it. 'Moved by the Holy Ghost, men spake from God.' Men spake—spake with the voice of man; but moved, not crystallized, by the Holy Ghost; spake from God the Creator, and not to, but into, the man, the whole man.

But what, now, is the subject of this prayer of Christ? What is this 'cup,' what is this 'hour,' for the passing of which the holy Sufferer prays thus earnestly yet thus reverently—if it be possible, if it be the wish of God?

The Cross was not yet uplifted—could the Cross be the subject? Does He who was born that He might die, and who knew it; He who had talked on the holy mount with Moses and Elias of the decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem; He who had hasted but now to Jerusalem, marching

before the rest, because He longed for the baptism of blood, and felt Himself straitened till it was accomplished—does He now pray that He may be excused from that baptism—in other words, that He may be allowed at this supreme moment to leave unfulfilled that mission for which He had left heaven when He took it upon Him to deliver man? Does it need *this* to make us feel that He can feel with us in all the ills that flesh is heir to? Must He sink below the heroism of heathen patriots, infinitely below the faith of His own saints, men, women, and children, that He may nerve us for the pains of death by shrinking from them in Himself?

The questions are answered in the asking. It was not the Cross, it was not the scourging nor the spitting, not the nails nor the thirst nor the gangrene, from which the prayer of the Agony sought His deliverance. It was from a thing worse than death to the holy soul of the God-Man. It was from that 'hour,' then beginning, of the conscious sin-bearing and sin-becoming; the conscious incorpora-

tion of the Sinless with the sinner in his sin; the conscious investiture with the defiled garment of all the sins of all the generations, not least of the generations yet unborn of His own careless inconsistent sinning ones—it was from that ‘hour’ and from that ‘cup,’ not of the dying—for joy was before Him, Scripture says, beyond and through and by means of that—not of the dying, but of the sin-becoming, of the having the powers of evil so near that the very breath and whisper of the enemy should be on the face and in the ear of the dying One, and God seemingly set afar off by the other presence with which He cannot dwell—it was from all this that the heroic, the saintly, the Divine soul shrank when it prayed the ‘Abba Father’ and the ‘if it be possible’ of the great Agony.

Some one may say, But if you count it unworthy of the God-Man to pray against the dying, how can you think it worthy of Him to shrink from the sin-bearing which was the purpose of the dying? I admit the

force of the implied dilemma, and yet I seem faintly to descry a difference.

There might, conceivably, have been a dying, and a death effectual for Atonement, without this 'horror of great darkness' pre-luding and prefacing it. The feeling might have been separable from the doing. There might have been an incorporation with the sinner, a bearing and a taking away of the sin of the world, in which the face of God should not have been hidden from the sinless One during this enterprise of self-sacrifice. We know not—but it does seem as though there might have been a Calvary without a Gethsemane, a Crucifixion not aggravated by the 'lama sabachthani.' If this is not a mere human invention, then there was room for a prayer that the hour and the cup might pass from Him, and yet leave Him the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

Father, if it be possible—Father, if it be Thy will, Thy wish (St Luke says)—

let me pass to the mocking and the scourging and the crucifying with Thee full in view as the Father so loving the world that He gave the Son, so loving the Son that He cheers Him with His presence while He waits for Him to share His throne.

St Luke and St Mark leave it to St Matthew to reveal the second form of the supplication. But it may not be without a hint of it that St Luke here records the appearance of the Angel strengthening Him. And why should we who read without suspicion of the ministering Angels of the Temptation count it a thing incredible that a like comfort should have been vouchsafed to the sore distress of the Agony in Gethsemane? Surely the capricious incredulity of the Christian is more wonderful in heaven than the consistent cavilling of the scoffer.

‘When He had offered up supplications and prayers with strong crying and tears, He was heard,’ the Scripture says, ‘in that He feared.’ The Angel strengthening was the first answer. The redoubled fervour of

the prayer was the second. 'There appeared unto Him an Angel from heaven strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.'

Brethren, what gift from heaven could equal for some of us that of fervour in praying? O for one thrill of that 'Agony,' that wrestling, that struggle and conflict as with an embodied person, which is St Luke's word for the transaction in Gethsemane. The ministering Angel soothed not, lulled not, this Agony. Rather he nerved the Sufferer for an intenser, a more vehement effort. The agony of the bloody sweat followed upon his appearance. Let us ask that sign of the being heard; a relief, though it be through pain of soul and body, from this dull, lazy, self-complacent or self-desperate languor in asking, which does not, will not, cannot receive anything of the Lord.

Earnestness, intensity, of praying is one sign. St Matthew tells us that there was

another. Read with attention the two prayers, as he records them, of the Agony, and you will see in the second (with reverence we would say it, yet have we not the warrant of Inspiration for saying it?) a growth of submissiveness between the two. The one prayer says, 'If it be possible, let the cup pass—only not my will but Thine be done.' The other prayer says, 'If it is not possible'—and the Greek idiom has in it, 'if it is not possible, *and it is not*'—'that the cup pass without the drinking, Thy will be done.' The first prayer is submissive, but it asks the boon: the second prayer accepts the refusal, asks *only* that the will be done.

Brethren, either grace 'is admirable—the grace of earnestness, and the grace of submission: the combination of the two is an *evidence*, for it is Divine. To ask earnestly for some spiritual blessing is a mark of grace: to give up the thought of the blessing and throw all the earnestness into the prayer, 'Thy will be done'—no tame acquiescence in the inevitable, no mere resignation to the

irresistible, but an intensity of desire that the painful thing, the disappointing thing, should come that God may be glorified in it—this is above the measure of the stature of the Christian, but it is not above the measure of the stature of Christ.

The prayers of Christ culminate in this prayer. It is the first scene of the last act of the drama of the life of lives. There seems some reason to suppose that the season of darkness which began in Gethsemane lasted through the night-day closed with the *Τετέλεσται*. It seems to explain much in the events of those long hours: it seems also to add something to the beauty and the majesty of the Passion. If all through those hours of bodily torture, of uttermost shame and pain, there continued also an anguish of soul and spirit arising from the clouding of the Father's countenance, so that the holy and beloved Son suffered as though outcast and unregarded, and even the last breath was drawn without the comfort which has cheered so many martyrdoms and made so

many saints able to rejoice in their tribulation—if the commendation of the departing spirit was made into the hands of a God hiding Himself—who shall fail to enter with increased intelligence as well as increased reverence into the old challenge, doubly applicable (if so) to the Saviour's Passion, 'Behold and see if there be any sorrow'—recorded in history or capable of entering into the heart of man—'like unto my sorrow?'

We have found examples, in the pages of this one Gospel, of prayers offered by our Saviour Christ in almost all kinds and varieties of circumstance. Prayer was His life. It was no studied setting of an example, it was no elaborate representation of a Divine human perfection, it was the simple expression of a necessity like that, only above that, which demands food or air. He was in heaven still on earth, and thus He lived the two lives in one. The secret of the Incarnation was the living within the limits of a perfectly inspired and indwelt man; and prayer was the communication which

supplied 'the Spirit not by measure' which made the life possible.

But the life of prayer had its moments of intenser vitality. Every miracle was wrought not by the inherent might of Deity but by the calling in of strength. By the grave of Lazarus He said, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me.' He ascribed the coming miracle to the hearing, though the very prayer was a thanksgiving in the assurance of a covenanted strength.

Thus too the repose, after an intenser exercise of miraculous force, was a repose found in prayer. When He had sent the multitudes away, with that kind and personal farewell to which He assigned so great importance, the disciples must enter the boat and set forth on their return voyage, but He goes up into the mountain and spends the night there till its fourth watch calls Him to a new effort of the supernatural.

It was so in all things. Most of all, we have dared to think, when something was to be done affecting future ages—something

of which He could say, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.' It was so when He ordained the Twelve. Their ministry was for all time. Still they sit on thrones. Still are their words for the healing of the nations. It was so when He taught them His Prayer—that Prayer which is the Universal Church's heirloom, the one authorized liturgy of congregations Eastern and Western, primitive, medieval, and modern, to the last day of time.

And yet once more, and lastly, in seasons of sorrow. It is common indeed then in some sort to seek God. 'They poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them.' Alas that the prayer should need sorrow to evoke it! Yet the merciful Lord stays not to upbraid with the waiting till then to pray. He despises not the desire of such as be sorrowful.

There is a spiritual as well as a natural sorrow. This night has shown it to us in its loftiest sublimest aspect—when it was sorrow

for sins not its own—for the sins of a whole world.

Our sorrow for sin is of a more selfish kind—yet even it is not disregarded at the throne of grace. The sorrow which bewails some particular act or neglect. The sorrow which bewails the pervading sinfulness. The sorrow which sees itself black and hateful chiefly for this—that Christ has died for it and it is nothing bettered. The sorrow, above all, if there be such a thing below, which bewails another's sin and another's sinfulness, and pleads long and earnestly for its healing.

This last makes some distant approach to a Christ-like sorrow. His Agony in the sin-bearing, His desolateness on the Cross, is its glorious antitype.

Let us adore, let us follow Him. We need a life of prayer. For lack of it we droop and fall, sin and die. We need intensity for this prayer. We need also submission. We need grace to make us pray even more earnestly for the will and glory of God than

for our own most urgent needs in the day of our sorest trial. That the Lord's Prayer should teach us. That the Lord's example has impressed upon us this evening. Such a thought is high above us, out of our sight—yet it shall draw nigh one day to the soul that has here hungered and thirsted after righteousness.

One last evening remains to us—we will pray for grace to choose an inspiring subject, and may He, who alone can, give us the spirit of power to speak and to hear unto edifying.

FIFTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT,

*April 3, 1889.*



VI.

*THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST.*  
*THE GREAT INTERCESSION.*



## VI.

JOHN XVII. 20.

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*

IT was impossible to close our meditations upon the Prayers of Christ without devoting one evening to that only prolonged Prayer of His of which we know the words. We may think with ourselves what it was likely that He prayed for after His Baptism, before His Transfiguration, before the Ordination of the Twelve, or the gift to His disciples, and through them to His Church, of their one inspired liturgy, the Lord's Prayer. 'What it was *likely* that He prayed for'—we could not quite for certain *know*.

The Prayer or Prayers of the Agony we do indeed know something of. St Mark tells

us one of these ; St Matthew gives us two : still it is but one or but two of at least an hour's supplications.

The chapter before us is one continuous and prolonged prayer : we know the very order and subjects and words of it. It is a prayer of the night in which He was betrayed ; it precedes only by an hour or two the terrible Agony itself.

Till now we have followed St Luke's guidance—for this last evening we turn to St John. St John is here the interpreter of St Luke ; he lights up all those other prayers of which St Luke has been the loving chronicler, and enables us to turn from conjecture into certainty our idea of their matter and manner, their very substance and form.

You read in last week's Papers how this was the chapter turned to—well might it be so—by one of the speakers at a great funeral—great, not in pomp but in feeling and multitude—though the rules of a Society, as rigid as it is free, forbid its reading

under the circumstances. It is always by an effort, and a painful effort, that we nerve ourselves to read it in the congregation. The actual words of the Divine Son to the Divine Father seem almost too sacred for that sort of use. They seem almost to demand solitude for their study, and silence rather than utterance. Even tonight I will not read them. I would rather take for granted your remembrance of them, and fancy myself to hear and to repeat to you, as we presume to touch the record of them, that solemn admonition, 'Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground.'

The Prayer of the 17th chapter of St John, whether uttered in the guest-chamber, or in the Temple-court, or in traversing by lane or path the space between the city and Olivet, has this feature of intense interest, justifying (if it were needful) the order in which we have placed it among the Prayers of Christ, that, though prayed on earth, it is for the most part an anticipation of the

heavenly intercession ; it belongs, as it were, to the two lives and the two worlds—‘the days of His flesh’ and the years of His glory—earth, and heaven.

When we presume to ponder it, on the knees alike of mind, heart, and soul, we find it falling under three heads and topics of supplication : (1) Himself, (2) the Twelve (now become the Eleven), and (3) the Church of the long future. The first five verses present Himself before the Eternal Father, declare His earthly work done, the work of glorifying God upon earth, by representing Him, as He is, not in word only but in action, to the conscience and heart of mankind : and they ask now His own glorifying, His own manifestation, by resurrection from the dead, as the Eternal Son, that He may enter upon that new and age-long work of glorifying, which is the giving eternal life to all whom God has given Him.

The keynote of this part of the Prayer is the word ‘glory.’ ‘I have glorified Thee on the earth’—‘now glorify Thy Son, that Thy

Son also may glorify Thee.' Glory is the forth-shining of light: in spiritual things it is the manifestation of excellence: in Divine things it is the revelation of God to hearts opened to the sight of Him. 'This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'

Two thoughts may be stored up ere we pass on.

This is the night of the Agony, the betrayal, the capture. This is the eve of the six trials, of the mocking and scourging and crucifying, of the thirst and the darkness and the exceeding bitter cry of the desertion and the desolation. We might have thought that mind and heart would be engrossed by them. But no; faith overleaps all these, and says, 'The hour is come for the glorifying.'

And what is the 'glorifying' of the Son? Is it the renewed adoration of Angels in heaven? Is it the repose of duty done, rest earned, and tears wiped away? No, it is the entering upon an unselfish, a selfless

joy; the ceaseless work of glorifying God by giving eternal life to souls made willing in the day of His power.

The five verses of prayer concerning Himself are followed by fourteen verses of which the subject is the little family of the faithful then gathered round Him, instantly to be scattered. 'I pray for them.'

When we think of those eleven men on whom the future of the faith was suspended—common men, ignorant men, exposed to all the temptations of fallen nature and to all the terrors and cruelties of a hostile world, themselves all (that very night) to forsake Him, one to deny Him thrice—we cannot wonder that He devoted to them so large a part of His intercession. We can read it still as profoundly important, as having in it the destinies of the Gospel, not yet started on its precarious course, having all the chances against it, and its one possibility the fidelity and the devotion of these eleven men.

What is His account of them, and what is His prayer for them?

He has manifested to them the 'name' of God—that which God is. He has given them the 'words' which God gave Him. He has given them, not the separate words only, but the 'word,' the great message, the great Gospel, God's own word. While He was with them, He has kept them, guarded them, by His own influence, by a power put forth from Himself upon them. He has kept them—all but one, whose fall and fate He leaves in the mystery of an 'It is written ;' leaves it for the 'hear and fear' of His people of all time.

One thing more He says of the Eleven—it is this. 'For their sakes I sanctify myself'—I consecrate myself to the life-long sacrifice which culminates in the death of the Cross: for their sakes—that they also may be sanctified, consecrated, like me, in a devotion of life and death.

This has been done for them. Thus they stand at this moment, on the dividing line, at the water-shed, of two existences; the life of companying with Christ on earth,

and the life of bereavement and orphanage with Christ in heaven.

The prayer for them is simple yet manifold.

It is not that they should be taken out of the world, whether by death or by isolation. They must be in it, by promiscuous intercourse—or the healing of the nations will be frustrated. But they must not be of it; they must be kept by the power of God from its evil. Christ is leaving the world; He can no longer keep them as He has kept, God Himself must keep them now. Personal influence must be exchanged for Divine inspiration, an inspiration not of truth only but of willing and doing. ‘Holy Father, keep them safe in Thy great name’—in Thyself, Thyself revealed, Thyself known—yes, inside Thee: ‘the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.’ ‘Sanctify them,’ make them and keep them Thine: ‘make them one, as we are.’

Again let us gather two lessons from this central part of the Prayer.

How intense ought to be its interest for us! Suppose for one moment that that prayer had not been prayed or not answered. Suppose that those eleven men had not been kept, had not been consecrated. Suppose that they had been intimidated—O how probable—by the little world of their own bigoted race, or by the great world of Rome and the nations. Suppose that they had consented to make Christianity one sect among many of Judaism, a new Phariseeism or a new Saduceeism; or suppose that they had consented, as the heathenism of the day would have bidden them, to add Christ as one more hero-deity to the crowded Pantheon of Polytheism—O how easily might they have been terrified or flattered into it! and where had we been then?

That perhaps is one thought. The other shall suggest itself in that word ‘Sanctify.’ He prays not that they may have a speedy triumph over other religions—that the Gospel may win its way, in a year or a century, to the acceptance of kings and nations

bowing the knee to a Lord of lords. This kind of success had been offered Him in His own Temptation, when the prince of this world said to Him, 'All this power will I give Thee if Thou wilt do me a moment's homage for it.' No, His prayer is, 'Sanctify them.' It is through personal holiness only that the Gospel is to spread itself. One saint is worth a myriad of worshippers. One Apostle fighting the devil first in himself is worth an army of preachers glorifying themselves in the name of Christ. I pray not that Thou shouldest give them the world for their kingdom—I pray this, that Thou shouldest keep them from its evil.

Seven verses remain, and they have the mention of us in them.

'Neither pray I for these alone'—these my faithful Eleven, here present with me, soon to be sent abroad without me into a world bristling with dangers—'but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.'

Let us pause for one moment to set

vividly before us the scene of that night, and to realize as we can that heart of love gathering into it all these worlds and all these ages into which He was casting that seed of life, that leaven of new motive and new hope, which was to make it worth while to live, good for any man to have been born.

Yes, we were present that night in the prophetic view of Him to whom time itself is no succession but one all-present Today, alike 'quickenings the dead and calling things that are not as though they were.'

And what then was the prayer for these beings unknown? It was threefold.

It was a prayer for unity. 'That they all may be one.' He lifts the idea of unity far above anything that men know by it: lifts it above that uniformity of speech and form which many make so much of; lifts it above the use of common Service-books or common Creeds or common Articles; lifts it into heaven itself, and makes it that unity which subsists between the Eternal Father

and the Eternal Son. 'As Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.'

Let us blush for those low earthly particularities by which we dwarf down such a unity as this to the measure of the stature of earth and its children. It is idle to say that in order to such unity as this there must at least be uniformity—that, if there be not such unity as earth knows of, there is no first stone laid of the higher unities of heaven. We believe the difference between the two to be not of degree but of kind. We believe it to be in different spheres that the very scenes of the two are laid—uniformity in a sphere of flesh, unity in a sphere of spirit. Certainly we see that within the same forms may be contained two different, almost two opposite, spirits; that the very same words may express, or may be made consistent with, two different senses, such that the users of the words may mean by them things wide as the poles asunder.

The unity for which Christ prayed begins

with charity and rises into love. There may be more real unity between members of different communions than between members of the same. This is where a kindly understanding is given and taken, and where charity begins by not seeking her own, by not thinking evil, by bearing and by hoping all things; and ends by believing all things, in the faith of one Lord, one Spirit, one God and Father of all.

‘That they all may be one in us.’ Yes, if each separate heart has found its rest and its home in God in Christ, there is unity at once for all the hearts. There may remain many ignorances and many inconsistencies, many ideas quite erroneous, and many expressions quite inexact; but the common love of the invisible Father, through the Saviour dying and risen again and ascended, brought home by the Spirit in whose unity God and Christ are one, is enough to secure that substantial, that imperishable oneness of spirit, which is all that is needed either for common action or common sympathy

until a day yet to be revealed, when that which is in part shall vanish away because the perfect is come.

O, brethren, have we yet taken that first step towards the unity prayed for, which consists in the entering, separately and individually, into the life of God? 'One, in us,' Christ says. 'In us,' first, separately: then, secondly and finally, 'one' there.

There is a second aim of the prayer. 'That the world may believe.' Has there been, on a first view, something of severity, something of exclusiveness, something (as a theologian might describe it) of Calvinism, in this prayer of prayers? 'I pray for them, I pray not for the world.' Has the Saviour of sinners given up 'the world' for a narrower circle of called and chosen? O, wait for this later verse, and read in it the very heart's heart of Him who said, earlier in His stay below, 'God so loved the world, that He gave for it His own only Son.'

Yes, there is mystery here, there is room for enquiry and wonder—there is also order

and sequence in the things of God: but doubt not the love which will have all men to be saved. Meanwhile, unity of Christians in God is the way to the faith of the world. Do they find no motive there? The discord of Christians is the bar to the world's believing; the reason with many, the excuse with more. 'In us' first; 'one in us' secondly; then thirdly, 'that the world may believe.'

Brethren, it is not variety of expression, it is not even difference of worship, it is not dissent, it is dissension, which blocks the way to the Evangelization of the world. Let us lay the thought to heart, for it has a word for each one of us.

'That the world may believe.' O blessed consummation—it comes not yet, but it shall come—when the words shall be verified in their fulness, 'And other sheep I have, not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be (not one fold, but) one flock, one Shepherd.'

And is there room for yet one prayer

more? There is. Hitherto our thoughts have been fixed upon earth, though heaven has in some sense come down to it. The unity of which we have spoken is a unity of Christians, in God, in Christ, to be realized and enjoyed in the Church of time. Even the faith of the world points still to a time before the Advent, while the scene is still laid on earth, and the unity of Christians still in flesh and blood shall have drawn a world first to admire and then to adore. 'I the Lord will hasten it in his time.'

It is otherwise with one last petition of the prayer of prayers. 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me, for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.'

He has prayed for His readmission into glory: He speaks as though He had been heard. 'Where I am' is not the guest-chamber, not the Temple-court, not the pathway to Olivet: no, it is 'heaven itself,'

it is the presence of God, it is the 'manifested excellence' which was His ere time was. There He would have with Him all who in the coming ages of earth shall have learned to believe without seeing. They shall see. 'Face to face,' St Paul says: 'see my glory' is the word of Christ.

O how faint and unworthy are our conceptions of the glory that shall be revealed in us! It is the sight of Christ's glory. It is the being admitted where self is cast behind the back and Christ is all and in all. It is the seeing the love of God for Christ, and the being satisfied, when we awake, to behold His glory.

This obtrusive, this importunate, this odious self, when and how shall we be rid of it? Not by perpetual efforts—though these ought to be—to buffet and to mortify it. Not by industrious endeavours—though they are right in their way—to think less of ourselves and more of others. It must be, by learning to see some one else, so much more beautiful and so much more loveable than self in

its gaudiest colours can look to us, that we are not so much ashamed as unable to go on with the old self-pleasing and self-parading and self-worshipping, because at last we can say, 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

'That they may behold my glory.' This is heaven. 'Chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely'—to be allowed just to see, lost in the crowd of seers, yet not lost: to be shown at last what glory is, and how coarse and vulgar a thing is all that earth called so: nay, but more than this, to feel that it so fills the temple not made with hands that the very priests, devout and devoted, can find no room there to minister: in short, to enter into the full meaning of the Evangelist's vision, 'I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof;' 'the city had no need of the sun nor of the moon to lighten it, for the glory of God did lighten

it, and the Lamb is the light thereof'—this is heaven.

Into this heaven, of the self-absence and the Christ-presence, may the Spirit of God bring us gradually in this life. Into this heaven, of the manifested excellency, may the God of grace give us entrance hereafter, passing through the grave and gate of death to a joyful resurrection, for His merits who as at this season died and was buried and rose again for us, His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

SIXTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT,

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